HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON
UNITED STATES EUROPEAN COMMAND

Tuesday, March 1, 2016

U.S. Senate
Committee on Armed Services
Washington, D.C.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:32 a.m. in Room SD-G50, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. John McCain, chairman of the committee, presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN MCCAIN, U.S. SENATOR FROM ARIZONA

Chairman McCain: Good morning.

The Senate Armed Services Committee meets this morning to receive testimony on the security situation in Europe and the posture of the United States European Command. We are pleased to welcome back General Philip Breedlove, the Commander of the United States European Command and Supreme Allied Commander, Europe.

General, this may be your last appearance before this committee. I hope not. So I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your decades of distinguished service to our country. Probably most distinguished was your tour of duty in Arizona, but anyway, I am very grateful for your candor in alerting Americans and Europeans alike to the threat posed by Russia, which is growing significantly worse. Unfortunately, you have sometimes been a lonely voice, but you have always been an impactful voice. This committee relies upon the candor of our Nation’s senior military commanders. I believe your colleagues, as well as your successor, should profit from the example of your leadership. We certainly have.

I would like to welcome your wife Cindy, a proud graduate of Arizona State University. She has been a strong advocate for Air Force and military families, especially
concerning education. We are grateful to her and your three children for the sacrifices they have made over your many years of service.

To the surprise of no one on this committee, it only took until the second day of the so-called ceasefire in Syria before Vladimir Putin resumed his airstrikes in support of the murderous Assad regime. I am sure Russia will say it has only targeted “terrorists.” And while the administration and many others will likely express their “concerns,” I am sure they will preserve the agreement, regardless of the price to U.S. credibility and the cost to our partners on the ground.

All of this comes as no surprise. We know why Mr. Putin agreed to a cessation of hostilities when he did. And it is no accident that he violated that agreement when he did. This is the same movie we have been watching in Ukraine for 2 years: Russia presses its advantage militarily, creates new facts on the ground, uses the denial and delivery of humanitarian aid as a bargaining chip, negotiates an agreement to lock in the spoils of war, and then chooses when and where to resume fighting. This is diplomacy in the service of military aggression. And it is working because we are letting it.

In Ukraine and now in Syria, Putin has been learning that military adventurism pays. The only deterrence that we
seem to be establishing is over ourselves. Indeed, 2 years
after Russia invaded Ukraine and annexed Crimea, the
administration has still not provided Ukrainian forces with
the lethal assistance they need to defend themselves and
which the Congress has authorized.

And now we may be starting the cycle once again. In
recent weeks, fighting in eastern Ukraine has intensified.
Russian shelling and small-scale skirmishes have increased.
Russian tanks have been moving to support the separatists,
and Russian forces conducted a snap military exercise near
Ukraine and the Caucasus in February. The ceasefire in
Ukraine, which was coordinated to begin precisely as Russia
readied its intervention in Syria, now appears increasingly
tenuous. And, of course, Russia still has not lived up to
its obligations under the so-called Minsk II agreement. But
with the fighting in Syria capturing the headlines, Putin
has succeeded in diverting international attention from his
invasion of Ukraine.

It is not that the United States and NATO have done
nothing to respond to the challenge posed by Russia. It is
that none of the actions we have taken thus far are adequate
to the scope, scale, and seriousness of the challenges
Russia presents to our national security and to the
international order.

Ultimately, the reason for maintaining a strong U.S.
military presence in Europe is the same as it ever was: to deter conflict and prevent aggression. But we must revisit the question of what it will take to achieve this goal when confronting a revisionist Russia that is undergoing significant military modernization and that is willing to use force not as a last resort, but as a primary tool to achieve its neo-imperial objectives.

In short, the United States and NATO need to prepare ourselves to deter and, if necessary, defeat Russian aggression whether it is in the nuclear, conventional, or hybrid domain.

Vladimir Putin views nuclear weapons as an integral part of his strategy to reestablish Russian dominance in the former Soviet Union. To increase the credibility of NATO’s nuclear deterrent, we must continue the ongoing modernization of U.S. nuclear forces and ensure that NATO’s nuclear deterrent forces are survivable, well-exercised, and increasingly ready to counter Russian nuclear doctrine, which calls for the first use of nuclear weapons.

As General Breedlove has pointed out, the current U.S. force structure in Europe and its underlying resourcing is predicated on the mistaken policy of what he terms “hugging the bear.” But while some may try to argue otherwise, Putin is not a security partner. General Breedlove, we look forward to hearing what steps you think are required to
rectify our force posture and resource deficiency in light of Russia’s modernized conventional capabilities, especially in its anti-access/area denial network from Kaliningrad to Crimea to the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

In the realm of hybrid warfare, we are unfortunately playing catch-up. In areas such as information operations and cyber warfare, we have been bested by Putin’s propaganda machine and his army of trolls and hackers. Again, under the misguided premise that Russia is a partner, we have let our intelligence on Russia’s tactical and operational capabilities languish. This has made countering “hybrid” tactics through effective attribution all the more difficult.

Finally, as we consider all of these important issues, it is important that we never forget the nature of the regime that threatens our security and the peace of Europe.

This weekend marks the 1-year anniversary of the murder of Boris Nemtsov on a bridge in the shadow of the Kremlin. Boris was a friend to many of us. He was a Russian patriot who had the courage to tell the truth about the authoritarianism, rampant corruption, and imperial ambitions that are endemic to Putin’s regime. Boris gave his life to tell these truths. We must honor his memory by resisting Vladimir Putin’s dark and dangerous view of the world and by speaking up for the aspirations of so many Russians who
still long for a future of opportunity, rule of law, and good relations with Europe and the United States.

That is what 30,000 Russians did this Sunday, marching across Moscow in tribute to Boris chanting “Russia will be free.” That is our hope as well.

Senator Reed?
STATEMENT OF HON. JACK REED, U.S. SENATOR FROM RHODE ISLAND

Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Let me join you in welcoming General Breedlove. Again, this could likely be your last hearing here. General, let me thank you also for your extraordinary to the Air Force and to the Nation and to thank Cindy for her service and the family. You have made us extraordinarily proud of all your efforts. Thank you, sir.

The security landscape in your area of operations has undergone fundamental changes on many fronts. To the east, an aggressive Russia continues to violate international convention in an attempt to fracture the post-Cold War vision of a Europe that is whole, free, and at peace. To the south, Europe faces multiple threats to stability, including the ongoing conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and North Africa, the prospect of foreign terrorist fighters returning to your area of operations, and the overwhelming influx of refugees that shows little sign of abatement. And in the far north, as the Arctic becomes increasingly accessible to international shipping traffic, Russia has intensified their military activity along the Northern Sea Route, in what may be seen as an attempt to militarize a region that should remain peaceful.

To address this multifaceted security situation, your
command recently released an updated EUCOM theater strategy. The strategy characterizes Russia as the most prominent and imminent security challenge, and it lists deterring Russian aggression as the top priority. This is a significant departure from past strategy documents. Despite these new realities, the U.S. force posture in Europe is still sized for a time when we viewed Russia through a much different set of lenses.

The President’s budget requests the European Reassurance Initiative is designed to address this new security paradigm. The ERI request would increase ongoing efforts to reassure allies and partners and focus more intently on deterrence measures. The predominant expenditures are for prepositioning equipment in Central and Eastern Europe and for the heel-to-toe rotational deployment of an armored brigade combat team. However, this force posture will only represent a fraction of the Cold War presence. General, the committee will be interested to hear your views on the appropriate size and shape of U.S. forces in Europe to effectively carry out these assurance and deterrence missions.

ERI also provides funds for increased and expanded bilateral and multilateral exercises and additional efforts to build partner capacity. The committee will be interested to hear your views on how we can best assist our allies and
partners to be capable and credible forces. We would also
like to hear your views on what you believe these activities
will do to help incentivize NATO members to fulfill their
Wales commitment to achieve defense spending at 2 percent of
their GDP in the coming years.

In light of the hybrid warfare tactics used by Russia
in seizing Crimea and secretly supporting separatist forces
in the eastern Ukraine, it is critical that we have the
proper capabilities to provide indications and warnings of
Russian military activities. The committee will be
interested to hear your views regarding the capabilities you
need in order to provide early detection of Russian intents
and actions.

The Middle East conflicts and resultant refugee crisis
in Europe is something unseen since the founding of the
alliance. The security implications of the crisis are
enormous, threatening to unravel a vision of Europe that has
permeated the last 2 decades. While not specifically a
military challenge, the committee will be interested to hear
your views especially regarding the cooperation among allies
and partners in addressing this instability and stemming the
flow of foreign fighters that may be returning to Europe.

General Breedlove, again, thank you for your service.

We look forward to your testimony.

Chairman McCain: Welcome, General Breedlove.
STATEMENT OF GENERAL PHILIP M. BREEDLOVE, USAF,
COMMANDER, U.S. EUROPEAN COMMAND AND SUPREME ALLIED
COMMANDER, EUROPE

General Breedlove: Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Reed, distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

I have had no greater honor in my 39-year career than to lead the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines, coast guardsmen, and civilians of the U.S. European Command. These remarkable men and women serve not only in the European theater but also in harm’s way across the globe. I thank this committee for your continued support to them and their families.

Representing those families and with me this morning is my wife Cindy. I would like to recognize her for her own 37 years of service.

I am also honored to serve alongside the men and women in uniform of the nations of Europe. They are willing and capable. They play an essential role in helping to protect our own vital interests.

The last time I addressed this committee, the security situation in Europe was complex. Since then, the situation has only grown more serious and more complicated. Today Europe faces security challenges from two directions.

First, to the east, Europe faces a resurgent,
aggressive Russia. Russia has chosen to be an adversary and poses a long-term existential threat to the United States and to our European allies and partners. Russia is eager to exert unquestioned influence over its neighboring states in its buffer zone. So Russia has used military force to violate the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, Georgia, and others like Moldova.

In Ukraine specifically, Russia continues to use all elements of national power to hinder Kiev. We have recently seen an increase in the level of violence along the line of contact in the Donbass, as well as a number of diplomatic, economic, and propaganda efforts to keep Ukraine from moving closer to the West. The U.S. and other allies continue our effort to assist the Ukrainians reform their military and better train and develop Ukraine’s service members. Russia uses snap exercises to mask real deployments and to desensitize us to that possibility. Russia has established anti-access/area denial environments, as you have labeled and I do as well, A2AD, in Kaliningrad, in the Black Sea, and most recently in the eastern Mediterranean Sea and western Syria, sharply constraining our access. Russia seeks to reestablish a leading role on the world stage.

Russia does not just want to challenge the agreed rules of international order, it wants to rewrite them. Russia sees the U.S. and NATO as threats to its objectives and as
constraints on its aspirations. So Russia seeks to fracture our unity and challenge our resolve. Russia recognizes strength and sees weakness as opportunity.

To that end, Russia applies all instruments of national power, including its military, to coerce, corrupt, and undermine targeted European countries. Some call this unconventional warfare. Some call it hybrid. In the end, we see Russia using diplomatic, economic, and informational tools, in addition to military pressure, to shape and influence nations while trying to remain below triggering a military response.

To the south, from the Levant through North Africa, Europe faces the daunting challenge of mass migration spurred by state instability and state collapse and masking the movements of criminals, terrorists, and foreign fighters. Within this mix, ISIL, or Daesh, is spreading like a cancer, taking advantage of paths of least resistance, threatening European nations and our own with terrorist attacks. Its brutality is driving millions to flee from Syria and Iraq, creating an almost unprecedented humanitarian challenge.

Russia’s entry into the fight in Syria has exacerbated the problem, changing the dynamic in the air and on the ground. Despite public pronouncements to the contrary, Russia has done little to counter Daesh but had a great deal
to bolster the Assad regime and its allies. And together Russia and the Assad regime are deliberately weaponizing migration in an attempt to overwhelm European structures and break European resolve.

All genuinely constructive efforts to end the war are welcome, but actions must speak louder than words.

The war against Daesh hits home particularly hard for our close NATO ally Turkey, which shares borders with Syria and Iraq. Turkey faces its own internal threat from the PKK and it views the Syrian Kurdish opposition group, the YPG, as a close PKK affiliate. This prospect of YPG control of Syrian territory all along the Turkish border is unacceptable in Ankara. And further complicating the picture, sharply divergent interests in Syria have created a deep tension between Turkey and Russia. The risks of miscalculation or even confirmation remains credible.

EUCOM is standing firm to meet this array of challenges. To counter Russia, working with allies and partners, we are deterring Russia now and preparing for conflict, if necessary. That demonstrated preparedness to defeat is an essential part of our deterrent message. In an ideal world, as a core element of deterrence, we would significantly bolster our permanent forward presence. In a resource-constrained environment, we are aiming for the appropriate mix of forward presence, prepositioned war
stocks ready to be used if needed, and the ability to rapidly reinforce with troops coming from the continental United States. This means making sure we can accomplish our mission even when confronted with A2AD challenges.

To counter Daesh, EUCOM is actively facilitating intelligence sharing and encouraging strong military relationships across ministries and across borders. And to meet all real and potential challenges, EUCOM is a central part of U.S. leadership of the NATO alliance. As the Alliance continues its adoption through the Warsaw Summit, that includes increasing the readiness and responsiveness of the entire NATO force structure, improving our indications and warnings, or I&W, and sharpening our ability to make decisions at speed.

This year’s budget request reflects our solemn commitment to the security of our allies and partners and to protecting our homeland forward. EUCOM does not yet have the personnel, equipment, and resources necessary to carry out its growing mission, but the continuation of the European Reassurance Initiative, or ERI, would strongly support EUCOM’s efforts to counter Russian aggression and other threats by closing gaps in our posture and resourcing. EUCOM has carefully planned and executed ERI funds you have authorized over the past 2 years, and we are thankful for those funds. And we have done this even as our headquarters
continues to shrink.

This year’s budget request would significantly increase ERI. That would let us deepen our investment in Europe along five key lines of effort: providing more rotational force, increasing training with our allies and partners, increasing prepositioned warfighting equipment in theater, increasing the capacities of our allies and partners, and improving the requisite supporting infrastructure. Together the tools ERI would provide would send a clear and visible message to all audiences of our strong will and resolve.

Our further efforts to assure, deter, and defend supported by ERI would complement those of the entire whole of government team.

EUCOM remains committed to a shared vision of a Europe while, free, at peace, and prosperous. As my military career draws to an end, Chairman, I want to thank you again for your unwavering support of the men and women of our armed forces and the opportunities that you all have given me to lead them. And I now look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Breedlove follows:]
Chairman McCain: Thank you very much, General. I wish that every American could have heard your testimony today. Maybe we would have a presidential campaign that does not focus on the size of people’s ears and whether they sweat or not. It is disturbing because I wish that every American could hear your assessment of the situation and maybe we would focus on some of these issues. So I thank you for a very compelling testimony.

General, some of us have believed that the Russians are using the refugee issue as a means to break up the European Union. Do you share that view?

General Breedlove: Chairman, as you heard me describe, I have used the term “weaponization” of immigration. I cannot find any reason for the way Bashar al Assad has prosecuted much of his campaign against his own people. As a fighter pilot, I understand the ballistics of how you deliver a weapon. There is no understandable method by which you deliver a barrel bomb that reaches military utility. Barrel bombs are designed to terrorize, get people out of their homes, and get them on the road and make them someone else’s problem. These indiscriminate weapons used by both Bashar al Assad and the non-precision use of weapons by the Russian forces -- I cannot find any other reason for them other than to cause refugees to be on the move and make them someone else’s problem.
Chairman McCain: Some of us also worry about the so-called cessation is the Russians seeking the opportunity to consolidate their gains, remove largely the modern opposition from the area around Aleppo, and then consolidate their gains, authenticated by the facts on the ground. I wonder what your view of that is.

General Breedlove: Chairman, I would like to say up front that any genuine effort to bring a peace that is durable and meets the needs of the Syrian people would be welcome I think for all of us. What we see, of course, as you have described, is a cessation. We have not really seen a change in the type of sorties being flown, et cetera, as you described in your opening statement. We do understand that the sorties are ostensibly being flown against Daesh and al-Nusra and others, but I think that this remains to be seen and we will have to watch the actual activity of the cessation to determine whether it is a valid one or not.

Chairman McCain: In your ability to attempt to predict, do you predict that the Russians will increase their military activity in eastern Ukraine? And do you support us supplying defensive weapons to the Ukrainians?

General Breedlove: Chairman, thank you for the question.

I literally just hours ago got off the phone with our ambassador in Ukraine to get his latest reading of what he
sees happening along the front because we get reporting consistently that the number of attacks are up. In an unclassified format, the reporting I see is in the last 24 hours, over 71 attacks, and in the last week, over 450 attacks along the line of contact. The report from the ambassador is there are several disturbing trends in those attacks, and that is that some of them are now happening in places that were heretofore quiet, closer to Luhansk, and also that the type and style of the attacks reflect the weapons that were banned heretofore before, caliber size and range.

I believe that Russia will dial up and down the pressure along the line of contact to keep Kiev under pressure to meet their part of the agreements first, which as you know, are tough for Kiev to do. And so I do believe that we will see Russia using the line of contact and the activity on the line of contact to keep unhelpful pressure on Kiev.

Chairman McCain: Finally, do you believe we should provide defensive weapons?

General Breedlove: Sorry, Mr. Chairman.

I have said to you before and this committee before that I believe that we should not take any tools off of the plate as we address this problem. Russia is using all the tools of a nation’s power against Ukraine. We use that
simple model of DIME, diplomatic, informational, military, and economic. And we see Russia bringing pressure in all of
those. And so in the military environment, I do not think
that any tool should be necessarily precluded, and I have
made my recommendations along those lines.

Chairman McCain: Thank you.

Senator Reed: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, General, for your excellent testimony.

I know when you were here last year, there was a real
concern that these separatist elements, actually Russian
surrogates, would either surge beyond the Minsk line and
indeed go for some major urban areas, particularly coastal
ports. Because of your activity and more importantly
because of the courage of Ukrainian forces, that has been
stopped. But as you point out, there is continued activity,
military activity.

But there seems to be, based on my trip last September,
a shift to political destabilization of the regime in Kiev.
And that requires not only a military response but also
reforms by the Ukrainian Government, support by the
international community. Can you talk about this other
dimension of the fight, which at this point might be more
critical? Your comments, please.

General Breedlove: Yes, sir. Thank you for that.

And in my conversation with the ambassador this
morning, I just would point out again in an unclassified setting, that there appears to be some probing actually going back and forth across the line now. But it is nothing like major military muscle movements.

And clearly the path that you described is a very tough one and a critical one for the Ukrainian Government. As we all know, the current leaders of Ukraine were elected in a reform environment, and their own people expect reform as a part of their performance. As you, I think, correctly lay out, what we see now is Russia bringing broad pressure on that government to force problems in this change. And I must say -- and I have said this before -- it is really hard to do major change in your government when your nation is in the field fighting for its existence. And so having to effect these changes, while the military is defending forward, is also tough. And I believe that by slowing and discrediting the government, that there is a lot of pressure by the people and encouraged by these actions that you mentioned. And it is, I think, a very worrisome matter.

Senator Reed: Thank you.

Stepping back a bit in terms of the overall Russian both strategy and capacity, I think the chairman once famously described Russia as a gas station masquerading as a country. And I do not think it has been said any better, frankly. And we saw the initiation of a lot of these
activities when gas was roughly $80-$100 a barrel. It is now $20 to $30 a barrel. It suggests long run or at least raises the question long run if we can, through our actions, keep prices at this low range, at what point might you see the Russians either lack the capacity or have internal problems that distract them from these efforts. Have you seen any indications yet?

General Breedlove: Senator, I think that I am not an economist, but I think I could talk to --

Senator Reed: That does not stop anyone here from talking about the economy.

[Laughter.]

General Breedlove: I think clearly the combination of sanctions, of the general economy, and the extremely challenging gas prices for Russia has brought pressure on them. And in the past, I have actually intimated that I did not see it changing anything on the battlefield. But I would tell you that now, Senator, I do see a few changes, and I would like to just stop there. And I would happy to have my staff discuss the particulars in a classified environment.

Senator Reed: Fine, sir. Thank you for your answer. Just a final point too. When we had a chance to meet, you indicated as part of the area denial efforts of the Russians are their extensive use of submarines. In fact, in
your command, you are only able to fill a fraction of the
requests that you make for U.S. submarine activity. If you
could share that information with us, I think it would help.

General Breedlove: Senator, thank you very much. And
I may actually just get up, if it is okay, and walk over to
the map just for a tiny moment.

Senator Reed: Yes.

General Breedlove: I will tell you what. I will just
sit here and do it from here.

Senator Reed: Why do you not have somebody to cover
the map? If the mountain will not go to the man, the man
shall go to the mountain, or vice versa.

[Laughter.]

General Breedlove: So, Senator, as you know, this is
an area that we sort of describe as the bastion, and this is
where Russia does all of its production testing and work of
its most sophisticated submarines. This is not classified
information. And then to get out into the world to be able
to employ those submarines, they have to come out through
this area over here that we call the GIUK gap. We love
acronyms. Greenland, Iceland, UK gap. So, Senator, at an
unclassified level, we are challenged to be able to watch
all this activity. And the Russians understand the utility
of submarines and have invested heavily in those submarines.
And that does challenge our abilities.
Senator Reed: Thank you very much, General.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McCain: Senator Inhofe?

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, General Breedlove, let me join in the conversation about your career, your contributions, what you have done. If this ends up being the last one, I mean, you can still come by and visit. Right?

General Breedlove: Yes, sir.

Senator Inhofe: Back when the continent of Africa was in three different commands, I was one of them who felt that we should have an AFRICOM. And so we have had it now for a few years. And the problem was, as it was set up, it was set up really without resources. So if something happens, then they would depend upon you, upon EUCOM, to be able to be resourced so they could deal with those problems. And right now, I can name a lot of places in Africa that I personally looked at and I could see problems coming, Burundi, Eastern Congo, Zimbabwe, and several other areas on both coasts where there have been oil findings and pirating all of that.

Now, if that should happen, you have already stated in your testimony -- you testified that you do not yet have the personnel, equipment, or resources necessary to carry out your own missions. What would you do if all of a sudden you
had to have those resources there and you do not have
adequate resources to carry out the mission as you see it
now?

General Breedlove: Senator, if you would allow me just
a moment of sharing a point of pride of mission, and that is
our EUCOM forces are, as you pointed out, all also available
to AFRICOM, and all of the forces that AFRICOM actually
have, we support in Europe in our basing, et cetera. And
our command takes great pride, when there is an Africa
mission, in being the very best support team commander to
Rod Rodriguez and our AFRICOM brothers and sisters that we
can.

So what I would say is we do have a full-time job
addressing the challenges that we see in the east, Russia;
in the south along Turkey’s border where Russia also is, but
the problems down there. Our forces do have a full-time job
in those endeavors. And so when we do have to use our
forces to support AFRICOM -- and that is relatively often --
of course, that lowers our capacity to respond and also it
uses our forces’ time when they are normally in what we call
dwell, remembering that all of EUCOM’s forces are still in
the rotation like forces from America and other places to do
the missions in CENTCOM. So when our forces are home from
their CENTCOM rotations are when they are able to address
AFRICOM challenges. So we call that doing that mission in
our dwell or the time we are supposed to be recovering from and training for our next rotations. And so it is a challenge, but again, I would offer in a small moment of pride to say that our EUCOM forces do a great job.

Senator Inhofe: Good. I was not implying that they did not. I am just saying that if your resources really are not adequate now and something like that could happen there or the Balkans or someplace else, it would be a serious problem.

We have talked about -- Senator Reed gave his gas station characterization. And I think we all understand that. You have actually written the European continued dependency on Russian energy specifically for Soviet and Eastern Bloc states only serves to bolster their -- and you are right. You are exactly right on that.

Now, when we lifted our 40-year ban on exports, how do you see that as rectifying this problem that we all know is there?

General Breedlove: So, Senator, thank you. And again, just to go back to that simple model, that D-I-M-E, the “E” part -- and I can just use Ukraine as an example. In the “E” part, Russia is very apt to use energy dependency and energy capabilities as one of the tools, adjusting prices, restricting flows, et cetera, et cetera. And so more available energy sources I think would help to diffuse that
tool that they could use.

Senator Inhofe: And I appreciate that. My time has just about expired, but I did want to remind you about our conversation in my office. We talked about the -- I happened to be over there at the time they had their problem, its election. That is the first time in 96 years. There is not one communist in their parliament. And yet, both Poroshenko and Yatsenyuk are having other problems right now. And you were asked about sending defensive weapons over there, and you answered that question. But do you see the fact that they have domestic problems there as also contributing to the problem that we are having over there?

General Breedlove: Yes, sir, I do in that I believe that a lot of pressure is being brought on them from the outside to continue this problem that they have to meet the requirements of their people. And so these are definitely pressures that are being used to exacerbate their attempt to make the changes that they need to make.

Senator Inhofe: Thank you, General.

Chairman McCain: Senator Blumenthal?

Senator Blumenthal: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I want to join the chairman in thanking you for your excellent testimony today and also for your service over many years and your families as well.
You began to describe for Senator Reed some of the threats posed in terms of undersea warfare capability by the Russians, especially our apparent inability to fully track their egress and activities in that area. And I wonder more broadly whether you believe that our investment in undersea warfare capability is sufficient. The President has proposed $5.2 billion in funding of Virginia class submarines in his budget and $1.9 million for the Ohio replacement program. More broadly than just tracking Russian submarines in your area of command, do you believe that our investment in undersea warfare capability is sufficient?

General Breedlove: Senator, I would rather not delve into the service’s budget because I do not know the different things they are having to trade off and do inside of their budget.

I would rather, if you would allow me to, speak to the fact that submarines, like other assets, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets and other things, are what we call low-density/high-demand, meaning that typically the combatant commanders have more appetite than there is supply. And I think it is a place where we have to make tough resource allocations as a military.

And so I am sorry to not satisfy about particular budget line items, but I would say that clearly we could use
more of these capabilities.

And one other thing that I would say as it relates to submarines is as it relates to our Nation’s nuclear capability, I believe it is important to remain ready and capable in that way.

Senator Blumenthal: A number of witnesses before this committee from the Department of Defense have characterized submarines as one of our chief asymmetric points of dominance. You would agree, would you not?

General Breedlove: I think we have a magnificent capability in our submarine force.

Senator Blumenthal: Turning back to the Ukraine, how significant is the issue of corruption there in your view?

General Breedlove: Senator, this is something I think that is a challenge in many places that we are dealing with around the world. And I know that it has been a challenge in Ukraine and I know that, if you read the papers, you see that they are getting after this and it is causing some disturbance among those who are officials and others in the country. And I think that it is a challenge, and I see that, as they try to address it, it does cause turmoil.

Senator Blumenthal: In the fiscal year 2016 NDAA, Congress authorized $300 million for the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative. $50 million of that was intended for lethal assistance, including anti-armor weapon systems,
mortars, crew-serve weapons, grenade launchers, and small arms. Are you satisfied with the pace of provision and delivery of those weapons?

General Breedlove: Sir, this year we have a group that I think does a wonderful job, a multinational joint commission, that goes into Ukraine and works with the Ukrainian leadership, both uniformed and civilian leaders of their military, and sits down, based on our military expertise and those who we carry with us from our ministries, to determine what we think in a broad sense is what is needed for the Ukrainian military in the context of these funds that you have graciously provided. That work typically tracks very closely with what they ask us for when they provide us their wishes.

And so I tell you that to say that we have this year done our work and put together what I think is a comprehensive set of capabilities that would answer broad requirements because they are everything from communications through lethal aid that they do need. And I have provided my inputs to my leadership with both lethal and non-lethal options, and I know that that is working through the process now, sir.

Senator Blumenthal: So they are getting pretty much everything they ask for? When you say they track their requests, I understand that to mean that those requests are

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General Breedlove: They track closely with what the Ukrainians typically provide when they provide lists to visiting CODELs and others.

Senator Blumenthal: My time has expired. I thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McCain: Senator Ayotte?

Senator Ayotte: Thank you, Chairman.

General Breedlove, I would like to thank you for your excellent leadership and service to our country and your family as well.

I would like to ask -- you have said I think on several occasions before this committee today that you have submitted your plans on your recommendations for both lethal and non-lethal support to Ukraine. And I would like to ask you how long ago did you submit those proposals to the administration.

General Breedlove: Ma’am, I will get this exactly wrong. It has been some weeks ago.

Senator Ayotte: Has it been over months?

General Breedlove: Can I get you that answer so I can get it exactly right?

Senator Ayotte: Yes.

[The information follows:]
1  [COMMITTEE INSERT]
Senator Ayotte: I mean, so here is my question. So you have been before our committee before. You have talked about the dire need in Ukraine. And we all know the situation continues to escalate based on your testimony. Is it fair to say, though, that you have already submitted your recommendation? I know you are going to check on me, but we are talking more than weeks. Are we not talking months here?

General Breedlove: It could be, ma’am. I just need to get it right.

Senator Ayotte: I think it is important for us to understand this because you have not gotten an answer yet. Have you?

General Breedlove: We have not seen the final result of that --

Senator Ayotte: Well, here is the problem. There is a real urgency here. We got an issue with Russia, and you have made your recommendations. We admire your service. You have said let us make sure we do not take any options off the table. This committee, over a year ago plus, as a whole on a bipartisan basis, said let us provide lethal support so Ukrainians can defend themselves. And it has not happened. You have not even gotten an answer.

So we look forward to hearing when you submitted this. But I would call on the administration to support Ukraine
and to take up your recommendations and to act with some
urgency here on behalf of our friends, the Ukrainian people,
who we have seen Russia blow off the Budapest Memorandum and
we also see their aggression, and it is time for us to stand
with the people of Ukraine.

I would like to also ask you in the wake of the
November terrorist attack in Paris, to what degree do you
believe that ISIS will continue to attempt to infiltrate
their refugee flows.

General Breedlove: Ma’am, I think that they are doing
that today. I think that as you know, over a year, maybe
even as much as 2 years ago when we had refugee flows that
were not completely consistent but probably more legitimate
refugees fleeing nonresponsive governments, ungoverned
spaces, civil war, terrorism, what we have seen growing in
the past months and year is that in that flow of refugees,
we see criminality, terrorism, and foreign fighters. And I
know that does not sound like a distinction, but I see a
distinction in the latter two. And so this criminality, the
terrorists, and the returning foreign fighters are clearly a
daily part of the refugee flow now.

Senator Ayotte: So this is a real risk, obviously,
both to Europe and ourselves as we look at this refugee
issue and something that we need to be very careful about in
terms of screening and also making sure, especially with the
number of refugees flowing both into Europe and also some of them coming here that we are very careful about this. Would you agree with that?

General Breedlove: Ma’am, I think we need to be careful about all flows of these refugees. Yes, ma’am.

Senator Ayotte: Thank you.

I would like to ask what specific steps have we taken in European Command to ensure that Moscow does not gain a military advantage as a result of its development of ground-launched cruise missiles in violation of the INF Treaty. And this violation has been something that has been noted many times in this committee over the last couple of years.

General Breedlove: Ma’am, thank you for that question. I think you have heard actually in testimony before this committee the Secretary of Defense’s plan on how to address that. At an unclassified level, he lays out four steps, and that is what we are doing — or five steps, and that is what we are doing. Again, at a classified level, I would love to have my staff get with yours over those steps.

Senator Ayotte: That would be helpful. What I have not seen, though — maybe I am missing it — I have not seen us really press Russia or call them out on this in a very strenuous way. Am I missing something?

General Breedlove: Ma’am, I guess that is a question of degree. We are calling them out, and the State
Department and others who deal with this in the treaty realm are the first and primary voices now. And I would not want to speak for their efforts at this point.

Senator Ayotte: Well, I look forward to also hearing more in a classified setting about our response. But I continue to remain concerned. Russia has essentially blown off the INF Treaty, and what it means for, obviously, the protection of us and our allies.

General Breedlove: Ma’am, we will have the staffs connect so that the classified piece can be done.

Senator Ayotte: Thank you.

Chairman McCain: General, in response to Senator Ayotte about terrorists in the flow of refugees, logic compels us to assume the risk of attacks on the United States of America or European countries is significantly increased. Is that a conclusion you could draw?

General Breedlove: Chairman, I would take Daesh at their word. They have stated that they intend to attack the West, to include the United States, and I believe that they will take the opportunities that they can to effect those attacks.

Chairman McCain: And if they are in the flow of refugees, the likelihood of attack is significantly increased?

General Breedlove: I think we have to look at every
refugee flow with the eye towards this could be that source.

Chairman McCain: Senator Manchin?

Senator Manchin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, General Breedlove, let me just tell you that of all the professionals that appear before this committee, I think yours is with anticipation and appreciation more than any. And we have heard from everybody. Trust me. So that speaks highly. And I would hope that you would reconsider maybe your exiting a little bit later than earlier.

With that being said, sir, this whole refugee thing is a great concern to the State of West Virginia and my constituents in my State. And I know that we are concerned. And you have said that basically those people that are the refugees sincerely that are migrating because of the danger to them and their families -- there are terrorists. There are foreign fighters and extremists entwined in that group for the purpose of basically wreaking havoc on the rest of Europe and the rest of the world, if they can.

Are the European officials as concerned as what we are seeing? They are speaking out and that is why they are cracking down more, you think?

General Breedlove: Senator, thank you. So the timing of my exit -- my wife is sitting behind me, so I must be very careful.
Senator Manchin: I was not sure if I saw you nudged or get kicked or whatever. I am not sure.

General Breedlove: We all have bosses, and I have a clear one.

[Laughter.]

General Breedlove: Sir, I do believe the Europeans understand and are addressing this issue, especially -- well, all of the nations, but I would highlight that those nations who have come under attack have shown us that this is a problem and that the problem in one nation can quickly go across a border into another nation. And so I do see all of the things that you would expect of our nations as far as we collaborate, include on intel sharing, policing functions, and things to try --

Senator Manchin: Let me ask then does that lead back into the thought process that there should be a secure no-fly zone, something of that sort that NATO is going to participate, all the countries that are concerned will participate in that versus basically eliminating the refugees who are really sincerely looking for some stability and peace in their life.

General Breedlove: Senator, I have heard this concept discussed in multiple forums. It was a large discussion at this year’s Munich Security Conference in several discussions. So I do know that these are things that
Europeans are considering.

Senator Manchin: And as you know, politics sometimes gets us entwined a little bit more than what we should be. The whole refugee bill that we have been working on, trying to basically make sure that these types of people that are entrenched, the terrorists, foreign fighters, and other extremists, is really the concerns of West Virginians. Could they be coming to this country under the guise of looking for some asylum, if we can do a better job on that end before they get to this end?

General Breedlove: Senator, as I said, I think that every refugee flow needs to be looked at with an eye towards it could be taken advantage of by those who would seek to do us harm.

Senator Manchin: So they are looking for every avenue they can in order to get here or get wherever they can to wreak havoc. That is known. I mean, the intelligence tells us that. Correct?

General Breedlove: Yes, sir.

Senator Manchin: Sir, also as far as on the NATO participation, 2 percent, are you seeing more of our NATO allies stepping up to the plate, if you will?

General Breedlove: So, Senator, thank you for that question, and it is worth discussing.

And the numbers that I will give you will be exactly
wrong from day to day, but they are approximate. Since Wales, the nations have taken this seriously I think. The numbers that we are using now, as we move through our last ministerials, is that 16 of our nations have arrested the decline in their budget. About five of our nations exceed 2 percent now, and about 7 percent -- my opinion, not an official opinion of anyone's, but in my opinion there are about seven of the nations which I think have very creditable plans over a creditable amount of time to attempt to get to 2 percent.

So still work to do. I do not want to overemphasize this in a positive light, but what I do think this indicates is a trend that the actions that our nations have seen in Ukraine, the actions that our nations have seen on NATO's southern border have affected a change in the approach to these budgets.

And if I could, just one more thing, Senator. As important to me as the 2 percent is the other modifier that we talk about, which is 20 percent of that 2 percent should be spent on recapitalization, bringing capabilities to our military function. If the 2 percent is all personnel costs, that does not sustain capability over time. So the 2 percent investment in recap is also important -- or the 20 percent investment in recap is also important.

Senator Manchin: My time is running out, sir.
I would like to say this. You know, the concerns that people have -- and I think if you watch television at all and the anger that you are seeing in the American voters and people that are participating in the political process -- very concerned about the United States of America carrying the load for everybody. And NATO being able to maybe call the shots and have so much influence and input, but expected for America to protect the rest of the world. And that is what you are seeing the pushback. People in my little State, one of the most patriotic States in the Nation, is concerned about why do we have to carry the heavy load. Why cannot other people participate?

And what you had recommended -- can NATO fulfill that they go down that mission road, or can they just pick and choose and say, listen, we fulfilled our obligation, here is our 2 percent?

General Breedlove: Senator, the policing function is really the rest of NATO working on each other.

Senator Manchin: Thank you, sir. I appreciate very much you being here.

Chairman McCain: Senator Fischer?

Senator Fischer: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is nice to see you again, General. And I too would like to thank you for your many years of service to this country. It is truly appreciated by the people of the
United States.

Last year, you spoke about the lack of ISR coverage in the European theater. What percentage of your ISR requirements are currently being fulfilled?

General Breedlove: Ma’am, I will get this number exactly wrong again, but it is a very small percentage. I think that is based on where we see where our larger ISR enterprise is focused right now.

Senator Fischer: If you would have to guess, would you say it is less than 5 percent? I know we heard from General Kelly that it was about 5 percent for his combatant command. My guess is it is quite a bit less.

General Breedlove: Ma’am, I would say it is definitely below 10 percent.

Senator Fischer: Is that an improvement over last year? Do you believe the assets are increasingly being devoted to counter the ISIL fight?

General Breedlove: So, ma’am, it has increased somewhat over last year. And again, in this forum, I cannot speak to the specifics. But there are a few things that we are doing different. But as you remember, ma’am, the counter-ISIL fight is really a CENTCOM fight, and so those assets are truly being allocated to CENTCOM for that rather than EUCOM.

Now, what I do know is that once again we are proud to
be a good supporting commander. A good percentage of what
we are given in EUCOM to do ISR is actually being used along
the Turkish border. So it sort of supports both our EUCOM
requirements and CENTCOM requirements.

Senator Fischer: Correct. And I am referring to the
annual airborne ISR requirements.

General Breedlove: Yes, ma’am.

Senator Fischer: I believe you have also mentioned the
shortfalls in the numbers of analysts when it comes to
Russia and dealing with Russia. And do you still have gaps
in that area?

General Breedlove: The short answer, ma’am, is yes.
But there is good news here, and I would like to give credit
to the intel community. When we first started having our
issues in Crimea, I went to our two most senior leading
intel leaders. And when I sat down with them and talked
about where we were in the height of the Cold War, where we
were at the end of the Cold War, and where we are now with
Russian analysts, and it is a demonstrative difference.

And to the two directors’ great credit, they created
what is called Bare Essentials, and we have turned around an
effort to begin to bring analysts back to the Russia
problem. Now, that is a good thing, but this will deliver
slowly over time. And so, yes, we still are challenged with
not only the analytical capacity, but the physical capacity
of being able to look at this problem.

But I want to say one more time to give credit to the intel community for recognizing the problem and beginning to turn around an approach.

Senator Fischer: And as we look at the effectiveness of the ISR, it is not just the collecting of the information. It is also the analyzing. I am happy to hear that you believe that gap is starting to close a little bit. And what can we do to help that process move a little quicker?

General Breedlove: Ma’am, can I take advantage of that question and maybe change the answer just a little bit and explain to you what is really worrisome to me and what we need to do in my opinion?

We need to develop what we call indications and warnings so that we can be predictive of what our opponents might do. Because we are primarily a U.S.-stationed force and U.S. EUCOM forces forward are somewhat less, are smaller than they were in the past, we need to be able to accurately predict when we need to bring forces over to solve a problem before it starts to deter it. And that is based on what we call indications and warnings. Indications and warnings is based on a solid understanding of the day-to-day intelligence. We need to understand what is normal so that we can see the spike out of normal that says, wait a minute,
we need to deploy the very high readiness joint task force
or we need to deploy elements of our rapid reaction
capabilities. So to develop that I&W, we need to first
establish a solid base and understanding, and that will take
more intel capability and ISR than we currently have
allocated.

Senator Fischer: And to what extent are we sharing
information with our NATO allies in order to help really
fill that gap as well? And how are they contributing?

First, how are we sharing with them?

General Breedlove: We are sharing with them, and they
are sharing with us. Now, talking to you a little bit as
the NATO Commander not the U.S. Commander, our intel
function called the NIFC, NATO Intelligence Fusion Center,
is where all the nations come in and put in their
intelligence. It is fused and then put back out as a NATO
product. And so we are all sharing into there to try to
establish that baseline of understanding that we need. And
so we are sharing with them. And as you know, our Nation
has some very good technical capabilities, and what our
friends bring to the table or others where they have great
on-the-ground capabilities that they share with us. And I
think we should stop there on that conversation.

Senator Fischer: Thank you, sir.

Chairman McCain: Senator King?
Senator King: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

A couple of specific questions, General. In your testimony, you unequivocally state that you believe that we should ratify the U.N. Law of the Sea Treaty. Do you believe it is compromises our national security -- our failure to do so is a compromise to our national security?

General Breedlove: Senator, I would not want to put a price like that on it. I think what I would do is tell you that military people have consistently supported the UNCLOS. And if I could just use a simple vignette of what is happening now in the Arctic, as we see the Artic rim become militarized, especially in a Russian context, and then as we see just like I think a week, 10 days ago, 2 weeks ago now, renewed different claims into the Arctic shelves --

Senator King: And we are not at the table where those claims are being adjudicated.

General Breedlove: That is correct. That is where I was headed, sir. Because we are not a member of the UNCLOS, we do not have the standing at the table to address that.

Senator King: I think I have asked practically every flag officer that has appeared before this committee that question and gotten the same answer. I hope the Congress will listen to the advice of our military commanders.

Last fall, I was in Iceland and was struck by the strategic value of that country and toured the old Keflavik
air base. Should we be rethinking our decision to leave
that base and find some way of having a presence there? To
me, it is a giant unsinkable aircraft carrier right in one
of the most strategic lanes in the world. Your thoughts?

General Breedlove: So, Senator, as I used the map to
explain that GIUK gap, Greenland, Iceland, UK gap, our
ability to project intelligence, surveillance, and
reconnaissance and other capabilities from places like
Keflavik are very important to us. And we are already
renewing some of these conversations.

Senator King: I hope that will continue, particularly
since before the facilities either get reused or
deteriorate. It is a marvelous facility.

We talked about the Russian economy, and I have heard
various estimates if oil prices stay where they are, 18
months, 2 years, 3 years before there is a real collapse.
And I think you mentioned this or suggested it. I think
that is a moment of maximum danger. When Putin’s popularity
-- my understanding -- is being maintained by his foreign
adventurism and to the extent that the domestic economy and
political situation tightens in the country, he is going to
be more likely to be adventurous. And I think that creates
some real risk for us. Would you concur?

General Breedlove: Sir, this is something that we talk
about a lot, and it is one of the scenarios that concerns
us. As the other elements of national power diminish due to
the economy and the military continues to be invested in
that, that dynamic is of concern.

Senator King: What do you make of his, I think,
unsettling discussions about nuclear weapons, particularly
along the NATO line, this idea of escalate to de-escalate?
It seems to me this is a change in doctrine that is really
disturbing and we should be thinking very seriously about
what the implications are.

General Breedlove: Sir, I am on record that I think
this is irresponsible discussion -- I actually called it
irresponsible talk.

Senator King: For them I hope.

General Breedlove: Yes, sir. That is correct. I am
sorry. I should clarify.

And it is not just Mr. Putin. As you know, it has been
a series of their officials from several levels of
ministries, to include the uniformed military, that the
nuclear weapon is considered a normal weapon in the normal
escalation or de-escalation matrix of resolving an issue.
And I have said more than once that I do not think that is
responsible talk by a nuclear power.

Senator King: Is NATO article 5 credible today? Does
Russia view NATO, particularly in the Baltic States, as a
credible responder?
General Breedlove: Sir, if I could, just a tiny bit of background. I would actually, if I was talking about the articles of the Atlantic Treaty, it would start with article 3. Article 3 essentially says, in my Georgia terms, defense starts at home. In other words, our nations also have to be focused on their own internal defense, and I think that I would remark to you that that has taken a very good turn since Wales and since Crimea.

Then article 4 is the next step I would talk about, and that is where nations begin to talk about the challenges that they see and that they might be facing a threat.

And then article 5, of course, is that collective defense article. It is the one that is most talked about, but I think the others are equally important.

And I do believe that Mr. Putin understands the difference between a NATO border and a non-NATO border when it comes to overt military --

Senator King: The Ukraine.

General Breedlove: Yes, sir.

But I do not think necessarily that those NATO borders mean that other elements of power will not be used. I think there is an incredible information/disinformation campaign and other types of pressures like economic pressures and energy, as was mentioned earlier, that are being brought on some of our NATO partners and allies.
Senator King: A very important point. Thank you.  
Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  

Chairman McCain: Senator Rounds?  

Senator Rounds: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  

General, thank you for your service.  

I would like to follow up a little bit with what  
Senator King has touched on, and that is the escalate to de-  
escalate approach. I noticed in your written testimony, you  
talk about the missile defense in Europe and you have  
identified four phases. The missile defenses that we talk  
about here -- what are they designed to protect against?  

General Breedlove: So the current EPAA, European Phase  
Adaptive Approach, is our American contribution to overall  
European missile defense. And the essential elements of  
that are, as you know, four cruisers -- or not cruisers --  
sorry -- let us be precise -- four destroyers that have been  
delivered to Rota with the Aegis system and then to build  
two remote Aegis Ashore sites, one in Romania and one in  
Poland, and then to couple those with a TPY-2 radar, which  
we have placed in Turkey. And so the first elements of that  
are all in place, the four destroyers, the TPY-2 in Turkey,  
and the first -- we have just taken delivery of and working  
towards IOC, initial operating capability, at our site at  
Deveselu in Romania. And then following, we are now on  
time, on schedule as we begin the process of the Polish
site. And these are aimed at the threat that we see from the Middle East and Iran and others in their missile capabilities in order to defend Europe.

Senator Rounds: So these would be defensive weapons for both tactical or non-nuclear, as well as nuclear weapons?

General Breedlove: Sir, they would defend against any missile because we would not really know. We might have a good guess, but we would not really know what kind of missile it is. So these ballistic missiles emanating out of the areas we are concerned about.

Senator Rounds: I noticed that when we talk about our activity and our nuclear deterrence and weapons of mass destruction with regard to our capabilities, you are very specific in your statements talking about them in terms of strategic nuclear forces. I would suspect it is in regard to strategic versus tactical.

Would you think that the Russians at this point view the same approach in terms of strategic versus tactical when we talk about nuclear weapons and the possible deployment of them?

General Breedlove: That is an excellent question that I have not really thought much about, and I will explain why. I actually look at the problem in a different way, and it was mentioned before. And that is that if you read the
open writings, completely unclassified writings, of Mr. Gerasimov, all the way up in their organizations, the Russians talk about -- I would not use the word “routine,” but talk about nuclear weapons being a part of that weapons continuum that could be used and is envisioned to be used in order to solve a conflict.

And so to answer your specific question, I would do it in this way. I think that they see nuclear weapons as a part of a solution if they need it, and so they do not draw nearly the strong distinctions that you might be describing as it relates to tactical versus strategic.

Senator Rounds: So if you were to compare our approach with regard to nuclear weapons, we are still in a position of looking at them as strategic in nature, whereas at the same time, it is very possible that Russia may very well look at them as a tactical weapon. And my questions is, are we prepared to respond in the case that that is their actual long-term approach? And do we need to reevaluate our capabilities if that is their approach?

General Breedlove: Senator, I will not dodge your question. I just do not think that is appropriate for this forum. If I could invite my staff to come sit down with yours and we can give you pretty specific answers to those questions.

Senator Rounds: Thank you.
I yield back, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, sir.

Chairman McCain: Senator Hirono?

Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, I also add my thanks to you for your service and, of course, that of Mrs. Breedlove.

I wanted to just comment on your position regarding the U.S. not joining in UNCLOS. And while you did not go so far as to acknowledge that that is the threat to our national security, it clearly disadvantages the United States in our dealings in that part of the world. Correct?

General Breedlove: Ma’am, I am not trying to be evasive. Just like other military individuals, I support that we need the UNCLOS to be able to address issues that we face today.

Senator Hirono: I agree with you.

In your written testimony, you mentioned the European Phase Adaptive Approach, and you were asked briefly about that just a little while ago and its capabilities to deepen our missile defense partnerships with NATO. I know that we have an initial operating capability in Romania and we are on track to put another site in -- where is it?

General Breedlove: Poland, ma’am.

Senator Hirono: In Poland.

So what is Russia’s reaction to our development of EPAA sites?
General Breedlove: Ma’am, we need to be very straightforward. Russia looks at this as a huge problem. They talk about it all the time as being destabilizing, et cetera. Russia believes that these sites challenge their strategic nuclear capability, which they then believe unbalances the nuclear balance with the United States. Russia has been consistently opposed to EPAA in all shapes and forms in Europe.

Senator Hirono: So in response, then has Russia done anything because of the position that they have regarding EPAA sites?

General Breedlove: Ma’am, I cannot tie any actions directly. I would just offer the following. Russia continues to aggressively recapitalize its nuclear capability. It continues to invest in its strategic nuclear forces. And as you have heard mentioned here, most of the world believes they have abrogated the INF Treaty in developing tactical nuclear weapons that are outside of what the INF was described for. I cannot tie any of that directly to EPAA, ma’am, and I would not want you to take that inference. But what I would say is that Russia sees the need and value for having a diverse and capable nuclear force, and they continue to invest in it.

Senator Hirono: Thank you.

You also mentioned that the 2012 Defense Strategic
Guidance that outlined our rebalance to the Asia-Pacific was
determined at a time when we thought Russia was a partner
and not a threat. Now that Russia is deemed one of our
primary threats, what are the implications to that regarding
the rebalance to the Asia-Pacific? And can you also talk
about some of the challenges of being able to maintain our
interests in the Asia-Pacific while also effectively trying
to limit Russian aggressive behavior?

General Breedlove: Ma’am, what I would rather not do
and what I have refrained from for most of my military
career is what we call shooting on someone else’s target.
So I would not like to address my concerns based on
something that is happening in the Pacific Command.

I would just tell you that we do see, as you have
described, that we have been in a period for 2 decades of
trying to make a partner out of Russia, and we have
approached our strategies, our force sizes, our headquarters
size capability and type. All the things in Europe have
been adjusted for almost 2 decades for that situation where
we would hope that we could go forward together with Russia
to create a Europe whole, free, at peace, and I personally
add prosperous.

But again, as you have said, what we have seen starting
probably in 2008, but certainly across the last 2 years is
we do not have a partner in Russia. And so we are now ill-
placed in Europe as far as our force sizing capability, our headquarters sizing capability, and we are having to readdress our planning and other things as well to readdress this issue. And so I would advocate that that understanding of what Russia now represents would require us to think about how we allocate forces.

Senator Hirono: And I think the same goes for our understanding of aggressive behavior from North Korea and China with regard to the Asia-Pacific area.

So thank you for not pitting one area of the globe against another.

General Breedlove: Yes, ma’am.

Senator Hirono: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McCain: Senator Ernst?

Senator Ernst: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

General Breedlove, thank you very much for your years of admirable service. I know I appreciate it. All the members of this panel appreciate it, and of course, all of the folks across the country appreciate it as well.

In your written testimony, you say the capabilities available for EUCOM force protection are not keeping pace with the number of at-risk locations and people and the magnitude of the threats they face. You did state that there is a growing mission and we are being stretched very thin.
So as much as you can in this open setting, could you provide us with greater insight into the risks you are assuming due to a lack of force protection capabilities? I know you touched upon military intelligence and maybe we need a better understanding of its role in EUCOM. If you could expand on that.

And then also, specifically what sort of capabilities do you need to enhance force protection in Europe not only for our service members, but for those families that are stationed there as well?

General Breedlove: Ma’am, if you could allow me to hit some generalities.

Senator Ernst: Absolutely.

General Breedlove: And again, I would offer my staff to come speak specifics to you. I do not think they would be appropriate here to talk about our vulnerabilities --

Senator Ernst: Yes, thank you.

General Breedlove: -- so that our opponents could hear those.

But let me assure you first and foremost that the force protection of our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines and their families and those who support us like civilian entities like Dods and other things out there, teachers and others that are employed. These are a keen interest to us as commanders, and we work this issue every day.
And to the point that you mentioned, which I think is very salient for today’s discussion, our ability to have the authorities and the capabilities to share widely with our partners and our allies is very important. And we do this every day. And as you know, some of our relationships are better than others, but part of our requirement is to understand what is going on on the ground, and normally our allies and partners know that better than we do. So key to our ability is that ability to share these things that we can bring to the table with the things they can bring to the table to put together a holistic picture to be able then to make the adjustments that we need to make. And I would tell you that we are working that aggressively all the time.

And if I could, I would save the rest for a staff-to-staff discussion.

Senator Ernst: Absolutely. It is imperative that we do assume certain risks, but there are risks that you should not have to assume. And so I would appreciate additional feedback on that.

Sir, how will the Syrian ceasefire affect Russia’s intervention into Syria, and specifically what impact will it have in your area of operations with respect to Russia’s activities in Ukraine, Crimea, Georgia, the Baltics, and of course, elsewhere in Europe? And I know we have mentioned the migrant flow. But if you could just visit a little bit
more about those specific areas, please.

General Breedlove: Ma’am, as I stated before, I think it is important or at least I can say that any creditable and real genuine approach to bringing a ceasefire that respects and addresses the needs of the Syrian people I think will be welcome and we would support that. What we see in the mechanization of the ceasefire so far we need to watch and see how it works. We see continuing activity that is ostensibly aimed at the Daesh and al-Nusra and other deemed terrorist fronts. So I think that the real effect of what is happening now -- again, we support it if it is genuine and authentic, but we need to watch it. I have said before that the actions will speak louder than the words. And we are really early now, and we need to see how those actions bear out.

Senator Ernst: Great.

And I am running out of time, but very briefly a number of these places that I just mentioned, Ukraine and so forth -- we do have through the National Guard our State partnership programs. Yes or no. Do you support those programs?

General Breedlove: Ma’am, they really represent almost 24 percent of my outreach to other nations, and they are, in some cases, our very best tool for developing partnership capacity in our nations.
Senator Ernst: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman McCain: Senator Shaheen?

Senator Shaheen: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, General Breedlove, I certainly share the sentiment of everybody on this committee about appreciation for your service to the country and your family’s service to the country, and that we will miss you. And I certainly hope that once you take off your uniform and rejoin civilian life, that you will continue to be involved in thinking about how we should be responding to the challenges that we face in Europe.

I want to go back to the testimony that you gave about NATO and where we are with our NATO partners and building their defense capabilities. And I wonder if you could talk about what you hope to see coming out of the upcoming Warsaw Summit.

General Breedlove: Yes, ma’am. Thank you for that.

So as we approach Warsaw, I have said more than once and I sort of said it poorly in my opening statement that it is really the road through Warsaw, not the road to Warsaw. In other words, I believe that NATO will have to continue to adapt across time.

What I believe is most important is that we continue the regime of increasing the readiness and the
responsiveness of the entire NATO force structure. You saw
at Wales we made adaptation to the NRF and we built the very
high readiness joint task force. We increased the readiness
of all of the NRF-designated forces and their capabilities.

But that is not enough. We need to look and address
the entire force structure, and that is why the investment
regime that we talked about before is important, the overall
2 percent, but also inside of that 2 percent, the 20 percent
recapitalization investment. And I believe what would deter
Mr. Putin in the end game is if he looks at a NATO that is
more fit to purpose, more ready, more responsive, and a
strong transatlantic alliance with Canada and U.S. on the
other side of the Alliance. I think these are all very
important. I do see recognition of this in our NATO allies
and partners.

Senator Shaheen: There has been a lot of -- I do not
want to say “controversy” yet, but potential for controversy
over Great Britain’s looking at exiting the EU and while
they would still be a member of NATO. Do you see a
referendum that would take Great Britain out of the EU as
having an impact on the security in Europe and the potential
for an impact on NATO?

General Breedlove: Ma’am, I struggle to be qualified
to make that judgment, and I am being very honest with you.
I would say this, that the UK remains a staunch part of
NATO, and there is no discussion either way about that. And the UK is one of our great leaders in doing things that we do inside of NATO, providing forces, providing leadership. And they and five to six other nations are those very highly technically capable nations that are incredibly important to some of the exquisite missions that we have to do in NATO. And so I remain completely confident in the UK as a functioning, contributing, and leading partner in NATO.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you. I certainly hope that that continues to be the case regardless of the outcome of that referendum.

I wonder -- one of the things that NATO is working with the EU on right now is the challenge of the migrants that are coming into Europe. And they have agreed to undertake a mission to help combat the criminal networks and the traffickers that are bringing those migrants across the Aegean from Turkey. Can you talk a little bit about how this operation is expected to work and what we think the chances for success are?

General Breedlove: Yes, ma’am. And another small point of pride. The ministers asked us to do this at our last ministerial, and the responsiveness of the NATO force and the positioning and the way that we plan and use our standing NATO maritime groups. We were able to respond within 48 hours and have ships on station to begin the
mission because the mission is still evolving. My headquarters and I have put out two directives to begin the mission and now NATO is refining what it looks like.

But just very quickly, we are there to increase the surveillance, monitoring, and view of what is going on on the ocean, not to be a policing function, but to connect then to the Turkish coast guard and the Greek coast guard who are policing functions and hand off actionable information so that they can bring the policing function. So we are adding that capability to extend their eyes and ears and do the point-out of problems so that they can do the policing functions associated.

Of course, the NATO ships, if they observe bad things on the ocean, they are still bound by the Law of the Sea, and they will react appropriately. Turkey has agreed -- now, I know we are still doing some negotiations, but Turkey has agreed in principle to receive any of these migrants that are picked up by our NATO ships in this operation.

Senator Shaheen: So they would go to Turkey, not to Greece.

General Breedlove: That is correct, ma’am. That is the understanding today.

Senator Shaheen: Thank you very much. My time is up.

Chairman McCain: Senator Lee?

Senator Lee: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Thank you, General Breedlove, for your service to our country. Thanks for being here with us today.

I want to start just by reiterating a concern expressed by my colleague, Senator Manchin. It worries me that the U.S. accounts for about three-fourths of NATO funding even though the European members have an even larger combined economy and population, and that defense spending in European countries has decreased by 28 percent since 1990. Meanwhile, just over the last 12 years, Russia has increased its defense budget by over 100 percent. And so this worries me a little bit especially given that I think there are some additional uncertainties that come into this in light of President Obama’s request to quadruple funding for the European Reassurance Initiative in fiscal year 2017. It worries me about, among other things, what this could say about the willingness of our European allies to increase and modernize their own defense systems.

But on that note, given the fact that he does want to quadruple the funding for the European Reassurance Initiative to $3.4 billion, the Russian Government is obviously not going to be taking this announcement happily. And the objective of the spending is, of course, to reassure our European allies that we are committed to their defense and we are committed to doing what we can to try to deter any further Russian aggression.
But I would like to ask you what are the chances that this spending, this increased spending, might have the opposite effect and that the Russian Government might use increased spending levels in this area both as propaganda and as sort of a public relations excuse to increase Russia’s own military buildup along its western border or activity in Eastern Europe. And how are you addressing the potential that we could, in one way or another, unwittingly, unintentionally, be catalyzing an arms race on the Russian border with Eastern Europe?

General Breedlove: So thank you. It is a complicated question. If I could dissect it just a little bit to the front end of the question about the concern of the investment of our NATO nations.

Clearly we are focused on all of the nations addressing their individual requirements. As we discussed earlier, article 3 of the Atlantic Treaty is essentially, in my words, defense begins at home. In other words, nations are required to prepare for their own defense.

The numbers I use, sir, are probably exactly wrong. They fluctuate a little bit. But here are the numbers that are pretty widely accepted. Since Wales, 16 of our nations have stopped their decline in defense spending. Five of the nations at this moment are investing 2 percent or better. And now, my personal opinion, not that of our government or
others, is there is about seven of the nations that I think
have a very creditable internal plan to reach 2 percent
within a creditable amount of time. At Wales, the decrease
in 10 years -- I think that a shorter time frame would be
more appropriate.

Senator Lee: 17 nations?

General Breedlove: Seven.

Senator Lee: Seven nations that would get there.

General Breedlove: So what we see -- and again, this
is not to be overly optimistic, but I am just reporting sort
of what we see now is that the nations have taken notice and
are beginning to address the issues.

To this latter half of your question, which is the
Russian reaction to ERI, everything we do in Europe the
Russians react to. Everything we do in Europe they use as a
part of their propaganda campaign. Every small exercise,
every big exercise, every investment, when we fly a couple
of bombers in an exercise, it gets big notice. And as you
have seen, they have a steady flow of aircraft into our
area.

So I do not want to belittle what you are concerned
about, the opposite effect in propaganda. Sir, they are
already talking about ERI in their propaganda efforts to
discredit what we are trying to do. And I would offer you
my opinion, which will sound a bit strident, but I believe
that Russia is on a path right now to recapitalize and
reinvest in its military, and it is moving forward in that
effort, and it will use things as an opportunity to label
them as a reaction. But I believe they are on a scheduled
plan and they are executing their approach to
recapitalization, reinvestment, reinvigorating, and probably
most disturbingly, to use their military as you have seen
them use it in Crimea, Donbass. They reset the line
recently and violated Georgian territory again by moving the
line about 1,600 meters south in South Ossetia to cover an
energy transmission point. And now you see what is going on
in Syria.

So, sir, I think they are on a schedule and they are
going to execute that schedule. They will use whatever they
can to address the propaganda piece to talk about it.

Senator Lee: Thank you very much, sir. I see my time
has expired.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McCain: Senator Donnelly?

Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If you do
not mind, I was going to defer to Senator Kaine for the
moment and then go next.

Chairman McCain: I mind.

[Laughter.]

Senator Donnelly: Thank you.
Senator Kaine: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thank you, General Breedlove. Again, I echo the comments about your service. You have addressed most of my questions.

But one area that we have spent a lot of time on in this committee kind of at the edges of is the concern about the Nation’s cyber doctrine, sort of when is a cyber attack an act of war, when it is sort of a lesser magnitude, what should our response be. Do we have a deterrence doctrine? If we do, do we publicize it? If we do not publicize it, does it really deter?

But I am kind of curious about article 5 and collective self-defense. If you could talk about NATO-level discussions on when a cyber attack of a NATO ally would potentially trigger an article 5 common defense obligation.

General Breedlove: Again, Senator, we would love to offer some folks to come talk to you about in a classified --

Senator Donnelly: Great.

General Breedlove: But there are things we can say here, which I think are very pertinent to your question.

When I came to NATO about 3 years ago, NATO was in a very nascent place as it relates to cyber activity and how they would react to cyber. And I must tell you that in an unqualified way that has changed. As you know, we have come
under cyber attack. We are under cyber attack every day.
And so the nations have very much understood that there are
28 doors into our Alliance, and if we have a few that are
massive and well-formed and a few that are wide open, we
have an issue. And so we have had a better understanding of
the collective requirement to address this challenge.

And I think I will stop there on that piece. What I
would offer to you is to have your MLA, maybe the next time
you are in Europe, take you through Tallinn, Estonia and see
the center of excellence there. It is an incredibly well
functioning place. It is putting out usable tools and
capabilities to our Alliance, and it is making a difference.
And you would be able to see a little bit firsthand if you
were to visit that in Tallinn.

Senator Kaine: I would love to do that, and I think
this is a topic the committee I am sure will be spending a
lot more time on generally, cyber doctrine.

The second thing. I am really interested in U.S.
activities to train the militaries of foreign nations, you
know, in terms of building up a NATO capacity. Certainly it
is the budgetary question but also the U.S. -- we do some of
our best work on the training side. And in particular,
since 2010, you have had a Black Sea rotational force, which
has been a Marine component attached to EUCOM, which has
some other responsibilities too, crisis response. But a lot
of their work has been training the militaries I guess especially in the southeastern portion of the EUCOM geography. Describe a little bit the utility of the Black Sea rotational force in its 6 years of existence.

General Breedlove: So, Senator, if I could, I would really like to open that up even a little bit bigger, and I will just use the work that the 173rd Sky soldiers have just finished up in Ukraine and handed off to another unit there.

I would tell you that your United States forces, all of them, Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine, are doing some incredible things training our allies and partners in Europe. And the BSERV is an incredible example of that. And the nations that the BSERV specifically works with, of course, Romania, Bulgaria, are incredibly appreciative of what they do, and they are benefiting because we see the troops that they train serving alongside of us in Afghanistan and other places, and they are capable and a lot of times come with zero caveat and work and serve right alongside our folks.

So let me just throw out a couple of other examples, the Marine work and now beginning some of the Army work in Georgia. Some of the finest soldiers that served with us in Afghanistan and Kosovo and other places come from Georgia. At one point, Georgia was --

Senator Kaine: I think they are in the Kurdish region
in northern Iraq as well.

General Breedlove: Yes, sir. They are serving alongside our NATO partners and allies in many, many places.

And as I mentioned, we have just finished a very successful series of training opportunities in Yavoriv in Ukraine where we have trained the national guard forces, not exactly similar to our National Guard forces but we have just finished that iteration. And now we are beginning to train the ministry of defense forces in Yavoriv, and this is an incredibly successful program and the forces that we have been training have been doing very well as they then move forward.

And I know you are aware as well, sir, we have just finished our first iteration of training Ukrainian SOF, and we are just starting the second class. Again, I just spoke to the ambassador now about 4 hours ago about some of the things going on in Ukraine, and he is very complimentary of both the work at Yavoriv and the work with the SOF.

So there are multiple examples, Georgia, Romania, Ukraine, BSERV. These are all very successful and our allies and partners are producing soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines who are serving alongside us in some tough, tough places.

Senator Kaine: Thank you.

General Breedlove: I hope I was encouraging there...
because this is a good news story.

Senator Kaine: I think it is a small portion of the DOD budget that we devote to training foreign militaries whether it is overseas or bringing foreign military leaders here. But in terms of bang for the buck, it is one of the best expenses we make. Thank you, General.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman McCain: Senator Graham? Oh, I am sorry.

Senator Cotton. I am sorry.

Senator Cotton: Thank you.

General, thank you very much for your many years of service to our country.

I want to return to something to which you alluded briefly in your testimony here and before the House Armed Services Committee and about which the chairman asked you. You said that Vladimir Putin is weaponizing immigration in Syria. Could you explain a little bit more what you mean by that concept?

General Breedlove: Senator, thank you for the question.

I think I have to step back a little bit in the conflict to start first with Bashar al Assad because this story builds from that point, and that is that what we have seen is the Assad regime using weaponry that has almost zero military utility. Again, as a fighter pilot, I understand
the ballistics of a weapon. I have delivered a lot of them myself. And the ballistics of a barrel bomb does not lend itself to military utility. What it lends itself to is terrorizing populations, getting them on the move, getting them on the road, and making them someone else’s problem. And what we have seen is that continue into this weekend, that style of approach by the Assad regime.

And then I would also say is that what we see in our Russian counterparts in Syria is the use of a lot of very indiscriminate weapons, and the percentage of precision weaponry used is very low. And it is hard to tell from what they are doing on their targets what their real intent is. But what we do see is that it is causing a lot of flow of people out of the stricken areas, getting them on the road, and getting them into someone else’s hair. Our ally Turkey, over 2 million that they are taking care of. In Jordan, half of that. In Lebanon, a huge number. So what we have seen is not only the flow into Europe and other places caused by these efforts, but an intense flow into the neighboring nations.

And so I have used that word. I use that because I cannot see the military utility of some of the actions being taken by these individuals in the conflict.

Senator Cotton: Most of these migrants and refugees are Sunni Arabs from Syria?
General Breedlove: I cannot say that because we do see a pretty large migration flow still from Afghanistan and other places.

Senator Cotton: But from Syria.

General Breedlove: From Syria, I do not want to hazard a guess there, sir. I will get you an answer to that.

[The information follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]
Senator Cotton: But while there not be military application, it would be a convenient political development if Bashar al Assad, who represents a minority sect in Syria, were to ethnically cleanse much of his country of Sunni Arabs, which have been a historic source of resistance to Israel, destabilizing Jordan and Turkey, two key U.S. allies on its border, as well as destabilizing much of Europe and the Balkans and Eastern and Central Europe.

General Breedlove: Yes, sir.

Senator Cotton: Is it a long-term goal of Vladimir Putin to ultimately divide the European Union and NATO?

General Breedlove: Sir, I said that in my written testimony, and I think I actually said it in my opening statement as well. I do believe that one of the primary goals of Mr. Putin is to find a division in NATO and find a division in the European Union.

Senator Cotton: And we often speculate about the possibility of hybrid warfare, as it is called, in one of the Baltic countries, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania. That would be a very high risk maneuver if you are thinking about it from Vladimir Putin's standpoint. Right?

General Breedlove: So I believe Mr. Putin, as I said, does understand article 5 and understands what a NATO border is as it relates to conventional force. But I do not believe that he feels necessarily restrained in using the
other tools of national power, diplomatic, informational, economic in these areas.

Senator Cotton: If you look at the political controversy that this flow of migrants and refugees has created over this last year in Europe, from Vladimir Putin’s standpoint, it might appear that this is a much lower risk way to divide Europe against itself than that kind of risk of invading a NATO country. Correct?

General Breedlove: Sir, I cannot make that judgment for Mr. Putin, but what we have seen is that this is bringing great pressure on the nations of Europe.

Senator Cotton: What do you think is going to happen as winter turns to spring and we see more migrants and refugees? Just in the last week to 10 days, we have seen the Visegrad countries meet with the Balkans excluding Greece from this meeting and discussions about shutting the Macedonian-Greek border, and therefore cutting off the land bridge for refugees and migrants going into Austria and Germany. Yet, Chancellor Merkel has just said that she remains committed to keeping her borders entirely open. What is the end game here for Europe?

General Breedlove: Sir, first to the first part of your question, I was just in the Balkans the last -- about 2 weeks ago visiting everyone from Montenegro to Serbia actually. On all of their minds is the concern of what
happens in the spring. Also, what happens in the dynamics if some nations close borders and others do not. It could shift the pattern through nations that are even less capable of addressing these flows. And so this remains a big concern for the nations of the area.

Senator Cotton: Thank you, General. My time has expired. But I do think it is always important to remember that as troublesome as these flows of migrants and refugees are, it is merely a symptom, and the ultimate disease is the Syrian civil war. And the U.S. administration bears responsibility for that disease.

Chairman McCain: Senator Donnelly?

Senator Donnelly: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And, General, thank you for all your service to our country.

When you were here before, when you were kind enough to appear before us, one of the subjects we talked about was Russian incursions into areas that they traditionally have not been, Russia’s being intercepted along Great Britain’s south coast, and that in order to avoid conflict, rather than going head on with them, sometimes we have worked them out, but they have not gone into greater conflict with them. Is this continuing apace as great a rate as it was before? And how long do you think this will continue, and what message does it send to Putin that he can continue to
do these things?

General Breedlove: Sir, thank you. We did talk about that, and yes we have seen the Russian Federation aircraft in places that we have not seen them before, and that still continues to today. But I need to be intellectually honest. I would tell you that it has decreased a little bit. I think that is primarily because there is a great focus right now on Syria. Assets are dedicated to Syria, other things. I am not sure that we would not see that go back up after a Syrian conflict. It may just be a question of capacity and focus, et cetera. So we need to be honest in our reporting that it has dipped a little bit as we have seen Syria pick up.

And I would just like to say -- I would not question the words you use, but our responses to these things in these unconventional places have not been that we yield but we do what is professionally correct in those responses in those spaces.

Senator Donnelly: What is your worst scenario in regards to Russia? What are the things that, you know, when you begin a day, you go this would be the worst case that could happen?

General Breedlove: I would really love to do that in a classified sense. I would tell you that we see a force that is becoming more capable, more fully qualified. We see a
force that is being used routinely in ways that we have not
seen in years. I have been pretty straightforward about
that what we see now in Eastern Europe, that force is again
a tool used to change internationally recognized borders.
Russia continues to occupy the Ukrainian peninsula of
Crimea. Force was used to go across the international
border of Ukraine in the Donbass, and some of those forces
remain. And so my concern, sir, in an unclassified setting,
is that we see a force that is, once again, being used in
ways that we thought were over in Europe.

Senator Donnelly: It has appeared -- and I do not know
if this is the exact way to describe it, but it is almost as
if Putin in Russia has talked about their nuclear arsenal in
a fairly casual way. And when you look at this, what do you
think we should make of it? One of the things that has been
discussed is, as our conventional strike munitions and
conventional strike ability increases, they use this as an
effort to try to balance against it. But what is your view
of how fast and loose they actually are in this area?

General Breedlove: Sir, I have remarked more than once
publicly and in testimony that I think this is irresponsible
talk or irresponsible behavior, the way that nukes are
talked about and they are talked about from the relatively
junior military levels right up to the most senior members
of the Russian Federation leadership. And none of us in the
West believe that this is responsible behavior in the way that nukes are discussed.

What do we do about it? First, we do not engage in that kind of discussion. Second, I think what is really important to me is that we retain a creditable, capable, nuclear force, and that the world sees that force as being creditable and capable.

And to your other question that our increasing capabilities, as it relates to precision, conventional attack and other things, this is one of the reasons that we hear these discussions. If a situation is not going well, the other side discusses that nukes could be used to escalate, to de-escalate, et cetera. But I do not think that we should dampen our ability to use our conventional force in the way that we have used it in the past.

Senator Donnelly: Thank you. My time is up.

I just wanted to ask you do you think that Vladimir Putin believes that article 5 would be enforced, that all of the different members would come to the other member’s defense if he took action in one of the NATO countries.

General Breedlove: I believe he absolutely understands what article 5 means in relation to a NATO boundary. And I would say, Senator, that the nations of NATO at the Wales Summit were very demonstrative, very quick about the absolute commitment to article 5 collective defense.
Senator Donnelly: Thank you, and thank you so much for
your service to the country.

Chairman McCain: Senator Graham?

Senator Graham: Thank you, General. You have done a
really good job in your position here.

It is 2016. Is it fair to say that Russia had
successfully dismembered the Ukraine?

General Breedlove: Sir, I think that I am not sure I
would use those terms, but the way I would characterize it
is Russia is right now holding the levers to bring great
pressure and to adjust the way things happen in Kiev and by
fielding a force in the Donbass that will give him those
levers into the future.

Senator Graham: Well, if you do not like
“dismembered,” what word would you use?

General Breedlove: Sir, I think he is now able to
exert great influence on what happens in Ukraine.

Senator Graham: To the Ukrainian people’s detriment
and our detriment?

General Breedlove: Sir, I believe that the Ukrainian
people voted for a different agenda when they elected Mr.
Poroshenko and Mr. Yatsenyuk.

Senator Graham: So it is 2016. Do you agree with me
that Russia has intervened on the side of Assad in a
significant capacity?
General Breedlove: I do believe, Senator, and I have said it before that I believe the main effort of the Russian forces in Syria are to support the Assad regime.

Senator Graham: The Russians have been bombing people we have trained in Syria. Is that correct?

General Breedlove: Yes, sir.

Senator Graham: Are the sanctions against Russia working?

General Breedlove: Senator, I think that the combination of economic pressure, the drop in the fuel prices, and the sanctions that are on Russia -- the combination of those have had effect.

Senator Graham: Are they working? Are they changing Russian behavior?

General Breedlove: Some months ago or maybe even a month or so ago, I would have answered no. I think today in the classified sense I could come to you and say there are a few things we are beginning to see happen.

Senator Graham: Well, I would like to have that briefing because my answer would be no. I do not see them changing in a positive way at all. Maybe you should do this in a classified setting.

What are we not doing that we could do that would change Russian behavior? Do you want to talk about that in a classified setting?
General Breedlove: Sir, I would love to do that.

Senator Graham: Okay.

Let us talk about Turkey. Are you familiar with the Syrian Defense Forces?

General Breedlove: I am, sir.

Senator Graham: What percentage of that force is Kurdish?

General Breedlove: That question I simply do not know, and I will have to get you an answer to that.

[The information follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]
Senator Graham: Is it fair to say that Turkey has a problem with what we are doing inside of Syria with the Kurds?

General Breedlove: Sir, I do believe that we have disagreements with our great ally over some of the approaches we take with the Kurdish forces in north Syria.

Senator Graham: Do you see any scenario where the Syrian Defense Forces in their current construct could take Raqqa away from ISIL?

General Breedlove: Sir, if I could ask you to ask that of the CENTCOM commander, I think it would be a better place to answer that.

Senator Graham: Okay.

From a NATO perspective, in terms of Afghanistan, do you believe that NATO nations will follow whatever we do in terms of troops in 2017?

General Breedlove: Sir, I do believe that the NATO nations are willing to follow our lead. And actually I cannot speak for those nations, but several have intimated that they would stay, if required, to get the mission done.

Senator Graham: Would you recommend against going to 1,000 U.S. personnel in 2017 in Afghanistan, given what you know about Afghanistan?

General Breedlove: Sir, what I have said is that I believe that we need to accomplish the mission. We are
there now, doing now, and that until we see that mission accomplished, I think we need to stay --

Senator Graham: Have we accomplished that mission?

General Breedlove: Not yet, sir.

Senator Graham: The counterterrorism is a mission that we are trying to accomplish to stop an attack on the homeland. Is that correct?

General Breedlove: Counterterrorism is an important part of that. Yes, sir.

Senator Graham: During your time in the military, have you seen more threats to America?

General Breedlove: Sir, I think that we are in one of the toughest situations that we have faced in decades right now.

Senator Graham: So do you think it is smart for Congress, in light of what you just said, to reimpose sequestration next year?

General Breedlove: Sir, allow me to speak to the European Command and my mission. And I have said that sequestration would be very tough on our ability to accomplish our mission.

Senator Graham: Do you think it is the signal we want to send to our NATO allies as we tell them to up their spending and we cut ours?

General Breedlove: I think it is important for us to
lead, sir.

Senator Graham: What kind of signal would it send to Russia?

General Breedlove: I think they are watching exactly what we do with our modernization programs and our presence programs and our employment overseas. And it is important that we sustain the appropriate presence and capability forward.

Senator Graham: Thank you for your service.

Chairman McCain: Senator Tillis?

Senator Tillis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

General, thank you for being here.

A quick question that is really to follow up on questions that Senators Lee and Cotton touched on.

The divided West is a great threat for you in doing your job. One of the things you mentioned that sanctions seem to be having some effect. Do you believe that they are prepared to renew those sanctions going into summer in your discussion with our partners?

General Breedlove: Sir, I learned a long time ago as the Supreme Allied Commander of NATO that I cannot speak for the nations. So I would defer on that question. I think that that would be much -- I would be on shaky ground as a military man to speak to the political positions of the nations. I am sorry to dodge your question, but that is a
realistic answer I think.

Senator Tillis: What is your personal recommendation? Do you think that it is a tool that you hope that the renewal of the sanctions go back into place? Rather than speculate on the positions, are you an advocate for continuing the renewal of the sanctions?

General Breedlove: I am, sir. The way I look at this it is one of our tools. As I spoke about today, I think that our opponents use all of the major tools of a nation’s power. We use a simple model called DIME, diplomatic, informational, military, and economic. The economic piece is what you are talking about. Our opponents use all of those tools to bring great pressure on nations, and we should not take any of those tools off of the table.

Senator Tillis: Thank you.

General, do you think that -- or could you talk a little bit about the linkage of Putin’s plans in Ukraine with respect to Syria? Is there some sort of strategic linkage there? Can you describe that if there is?

General Breedlove: Sir, yes. I do not think that Mr. Putin nor the leaders of -- the small group of leaders of the Russian Federation do anything in isolation. I think all these things are connected. As I have answered other of your colleagues today, I think that one of the major goals -- or two of the major goals of Mr. Putin is to bring
dissolution to either NATO or to the European Union, preferably both. If Mr. Putin can find a way to fracture those alliances or organizations, it makes it much easier for him to accomplish his larger goals in Europe at that point. And so I do not think that any of these operations of Mr. Putin from Syria to the Arctic are disassociated. I believe they are all brought in a broad sense.

Senator Tillis: General, in your written testimony, you have commented that our current force posture in Europe has been based on Russia as a strategic partner. I think you described it as hugging the bear. That is obviously not working.

So what concrete steps do we need to take to change our force posture in Europe to be able to deter Russia more effectively?

General Breedlove: Thank you, sir.

So if I could just very briefly on NATO, I think that what NATO needs to do I described earlier as bringing the entire force of NATO to an increased readiness and responsiveness. In Wales, we focused on the NRF, the VJTF, and some of the smaller forces, and we are delivering that. But now we need to bring focus across all of the force to bring readiness and responsiveness up.

In a U.S. context, as I described in my opening statement, I think it is sort of a three-step approach, and
it would take me about half a minute to lay that out.

First and foremost, our forward position forces are incredibly important. And permanently forward stationed forces are the optimum.

But understanding the environment that we are in, we then look at two other steps to address forward presence. One is that we will look at and are and a part of ERI is prepositioning forward materials that we can rapidly fall in on to rapidly increase our posture. And then the second piece is those heel-to-toe, fully funded rotational forces that use the prepositioning or come over to have presence and exercises. So that is sort of the step two basket.

The step three basket is a little tougher to describe, but in shorthand, it is we need to be able to rapidly reinforce. That sounds very straightforward. It is not. Remember that Russia has created a very dense pattern of A2AD, anti-access/area denial. We need to be investing in those capabilities and capacities that allow us to enter into an A2AD environment and be able to reinforce, and then some of the investments of the European Reassurance Initiative are on the ground, such as improving railheads, railroads, improving our ports, and our airfields again so that once we puncture the A2AD, we can rapidly address our issues.

So it is a three-step approach. Look at our forward-
stationed forces. Look at our rotating forces and prepositioned materials, and then ensure that we can rapidly reinforce. And that is the framework in which I am trying to drive the conversation with my leadership.

Senator Tillis: Thank you, General.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Chairman McCain: Senator Sullivan?

Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And, General, I want to thank you again for your service. I want to thank your wife. I know that you have committed decades to serving our country. I think you have done it in an outstanding manner, particularly your current billet.

I want to follow up on Senator King’s questions and in some ways ask similar questions that Senator Graham did.

It is 2016. Do you think it is safe to say that Russia has successfully militarized the Arctic?

General Breedlove: Sir, I do believe that we see a pattern there that concerns many of our nations and partners. As you know, we share the Arctic with our other NATO ally Canada and then six other allies and partners of NATO. Each are concerned with what they see happening in the Arctic where we see the creation of intelligence and surveillance capabilities, weaponization such as surface-to-air missiles, coastal defense cruise missiles, et cetera, et
Senator Sullivan: Four new BCTs, a new Arctic command, 13 new airfields.

General Breedlove: Yes, sir.

Senator Sullivan: So is it not safe to say that Russia has successfully militarized the Arctic?

General Breedlove: They have certainly increased their capability and capacity there.

Senator Sullivan: Can you describe a little bit -- and you and I have talked about it, but really how massive the last year the two different Arctic military exercises were? These were huge. And maybe you cannot talk about it in this setting, but I will ask the question anyway of whether or not we were even aware that they were going to happen or happening. When you move tens of thousands of troops and hundreds of aircraft and dozens of ships, normally that is something the United States military has an inkling about. And it seems in this case, they did it and we were pretty unaware. Can you talk about that a little bit?

General Breedlove: I would like to have my staff work with yours on some more classified answers to fully flesh this out. But what I would say is I agree with you that we have seen some very demonstrative exercises, and in certain ways, they did absolutely surprise us. One of the things that surprised us is how one of those exercises then morphed
into a larger exercise in the western military district so that we saw a very large what I would call strategically focused exercise, not that an exercise in the Arctic alone is not strategic, but we saw it morph into a bigger exercise.

Senator Sullivan: And when Vladimir Putin does those kind of things, as you mentioned before, that is not normally -- there is usually something to that. Correct?

General Breedlove: Sir, as I said before, I think he has taken a very strategic approach to everything he does.

Senator Sullivan: Let me ask another question.

Secretary Carter, General Dunford -- they have all mentioned -- we have talked about the Arctic in front of this committee, how we are late to the game. You know, if you look at the DOD’s Arctic strategy, it is pretty much a joke. It is 13 pages, 6 of which are pictures. It mentions climate change five times and mentions Russia solely in a footnote. So I think we provided proper oversight here and, in a bipartisan way, move forward on requiring the Secretary of Defense to put forward a no-kidding, real strategy and an operations plan for the Arctic. We got a commitment from Secretary Carter and General Dunford to make sure that is a very robust OPLAN for the Arctic. Can I get your commitment that we would have the EU COM’s participation in that as well? I think it is going to be important.
General Breedlove: Absolutely, Senator. And as importantly, NATO is beginning to take a look at this as well.

Senator Sullivan: Great.

Let me ask more specific questions. You know, as Russia is building up -- you have been in Alaska recently. You are aware that our Department of Defense is looking at building down in the Arctic, getting rid of the only airborne brigade combat team in the Artic, the Asia-Pacific, the only mountain-trained Arctic BCT in the entire U.S. military. That is the 425. You talked about a permanently forward presence. You talked about rapid reinforcement capability. This is a unit that you uniquely can do all of those things and fight in the Arctic.

To his credit, General Milley is taking a look at this, and he made some comments last week that he thinks that maybe given the situation with regard to Russia, with regard to Korea, that the Army should reverse this decision, what I think is a strategically short-sighted decision. Admiral Harris and General Scaparrotti last week were supportive of that decision by General Milley to keep the 425.

Do you support that decision by General Milley? And what do you think that that does to show Vladimir Putin resolve, that hey, wait a minute, things have changed? They are rapidly building up the Arctic. We have this ERI
initiative, but we also need forces out east. And the easiest way to keep the American resolve is to just keep our best Arctic warriors in place. Do you support what General Milley is doing? How do you think Vladimir Putin would view keeping that 425, which by the way, as you know, the Russians watch them train all the time? They do an airborne jump. The Russians do an airborne jump. They are very, very aware of this unit and its capability. Can you comment on those questions?

General Breedlove: Senator, I think it is important that we keep this capability and that we maintain its currency and continually address its capability to do its mission.

I think Mr. Putin understands physics, and the physics are that those forces in the north across the pole are as close if not closer than many other forces we have in our inventory. And so the speed and response of that set of forces and capabilities are very important, and I think Mr. Putin understands that.

Senator Sullivan: So do you support what General Milley --

General Breedlove: We need to keep this capability, sir.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Chairman McCain: Senator Wicker?

Senator Wicker: Thank you very much.

And thank you, General.

I have been in and out, but let me ask you about -- let me get back to Ukraine and then maybe touch on the refugee crisis too.

We have got these frozen conflicts throughout the region, Moldova, Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh. In your judgment, is Ukraine now to be added to that list of frozen conflicts or is the situation a little too kinetic there for us to know?

General Breedlove: Sir, thank you, and please do not take this as any sort of a disagreement. But I really do not like the term “frozen conflicts.”

Senator Wicker: But it is a term that is widely --

General Breedlove: Yes, sir, absolutely. And that is where I was going. It is a term that is widely used, but I would like to point out that most of these are still hot and people are dying in some of these places. There are four or five of them. Georgia, as I mentioned earlier -- the Russians recently moved the line in South Ossetia another 1,600 meters to the south, and it took over a major energy transmission point.

Senator Wicker: What were the casualties there?

General Breedlove: That was done bloodless. They
simply moved the line.

In Nagorno-Karabakh, we routinely have days where soldiers are injured and occasionally killed there.

Transnistria. We have not seen any actual injuries, sir, but we have seen the reinforcement, refitting, and strengthening of that garrison in Transnistria.

South Ossetia, Abkhazia, still extant.

And now I believe that Ukraine is in a position where the Russians would like to maintain the capability to continue to put military pressure on Kiev via that conflict. But it is anything but frozen. As I said, yesterday about 71 engagements in the last 24 hours in that area, and over 450 engagements in that area over the last week.

Senator Wicker: What term would you prefer that we use?

General Breedlove: We are wrestling with that, sir. And I think “frozen conflicts” is good because people recognize it. I would just like to point out that they are really anything but frozen. Some of them I would call pretty hot.

Senator Wicker: In your professional military judgment, is the current situation, as it stands in Ukraine, helpful or harmful to Mr. Putin’s long-term interests?

General Breedlove: Let me answer the easy question first. The situation in Ukraine is absolutely unhelpful to
the people of Ukraine’s long-term interests.

Senator Wicker: No question about it.

General Breedlove: In Kiev, there is no question about that.

I think that Mr. Putin very much wants to have a hand in the direction of Ukraine, a hand in being able to regulate their desire to join the West, a desire to keep pressure on the economic and political decisions of Kiev. And so I think that his interests are to maintain enough pressure and influence in the Donbass to be able to shape that. So I think it is in his interest to be able to pressure Kiev through the tool of the Donbass.

I am not sure that I am ready to answer whether it is in his long-term interests as it relates to his own national concerns. Is that the question you are asking, Senator?

Senator Wicker: Yes.

General Breedlove: Can I get back to you on that?

Senator Wicker: That would be great.

[The information follows:]

[COMMITTEE INSERT]
Senator Wicker: As far as you have observed, is the Ukrainian Government in Kiev working together?

General Breedlove: Sir, I have seen some very good things and some challenges. I think that there is a great commitment. I have sat down personally several times with Mr. Poroshenko and with Mr. Yatsenyuk, and I do think both of those individuals have the best interest of their nation in the future. I think that there are some pretty tough structural problems that they have had to address. And frankly, I think their people expect a lot from them. As I mentioned earlier in this testimony, I think that some of the change they need to make is pretty hard to take when they are on a front and militarily engaged. And so they face some pretty tough challenges ahead.

Senator Wicker: Well, thank you very much.

Let me, Mr. Chairman, if I might, just ask the General briefly with regard to the refugee situation. We had a question I think from Senator Manchin when I was at the hearing earlier about the possibility of infiltration, and certainly that is a concern.

Would you comment as to the destabilizing effect in the territory of our European allies of this influx of immigrants and migrants passing through and the prospect for that either increasing or being mitigated somehow?

General Breedlove: The destabilizing effects are
multifaceted. The easiest ones to speak to is as I have
described before and I have in my written testimony that I
believe there is criminality, terrorists, and foreign
fighters in those flows. And those all have their own form
of destabilizing effect, criminality in just moving of
humans and moving of drugs and other things, those kind of
people using the flows to do that, terrorists, who have ill-
intent in the West. And then just returning foreign
fighters who have skills and may not actually be returning
with any ill-intent, but when they get home and they have no
economic opportunity and others, what do they eventually do
with those skills? So there is a lot of destabilizing
effect of this criminality, terrorism, and returning foreign
fighters.

The other piece that is, I think, more widely
understood is just the destabilizing effect economically and
straining the social fabric of these nations as these large
flows of people challenge already challenged governments and
social systems as they arrive. And so I think there is a
multifaceted challenge to the nations of Europe.

Senator Wicker: Thank you very much.
And I appreciate the chair’s indulgence.

Chairman McCain: Senator Sessions?

Senator Sessions: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

With regard to the European Union, someone wrote
recently that oddly you would think the European Commission, Brussels, would be the one that would lead a unified effort to deal with the migrant crisis. But in fact, in essence, rightly or wrongly, legally or otherwise, they are the ones that are blocking the nation states from taking action that those states would normally take -- or attempting to block them. Is that correct?

General Breedlove: Senator, being a military officer and not a leader of one of these nations, I am not sure I am really qualified to say that. But what I would say is that --

Senator Sessions: The European rules -- and the European Union is not making immediate decisions that would facilitate a more effective control. Is that not correct?

General Breedlove: I believe, sir, that there could be efforts made that could bring more unified pressure.

Senator Sessions: One of the things we all need, I think, to understand here is just because we got a group of nations together that pretend to be an effective leadership, sometimes they undermine the ability of action to actually occur that could be beneficial.

Is it still true that a high percentage of these migrants are young males?

General Breedlove: I believe that to be true, Senator.

Senator Sessions: Well, let me take another subject.
Thank you for your great service -- you and your wife -- and the commitment you have made to the country.

You have spent now almost 3 years in Europe. You had time in Aviano and Ramstein and other places. So you know the region well. Did the Europeans and NATO -- are they willing to improve and increase their share of funding for the defense of Europe? You have raised that a number of times. Would you briefly tell us your latest communication with the region about what they need to do and what achievements have occurred in the last several years, not promises for the future?

General Breedlove: So the numbers I have used today once, Senator, are again not going to be perfect, but the numbers that we see now in Europe follow the following line. About 16 of our nations have stopped the decline in their budgets, not perfect, but a first step.

Senator Sessions: Well, it is worse than not perfect. I mean, they have been declining and they are below their commitment of 2 percent, most of them. Are they not?

General Breedlove: Only five now, sir, are at 2 percent or better. And I would offer to you that I believe there are about seven now that have a realistic plan to attain 2 percent in a realistic amount of time. So, again, not perfect numbers, but this is an improvement since Wales.

I do not want to overstate, but it is an improvement since
Senator Sessions: Well, of course, we have a real interest in Europe in that they be able be free and independent and not be vulnerable to encroachment from the Russians.

However, I mean, I have to ask the President’s request for $3.4 billion in the European Reassurance Initiative -- how much of that has been matched by the Europeans? Do they have any formal commitment to increase their spending for similar projects?

General Breedlove: Sir, I cannot speak to individual commitments at this time. What I have seen, not from the $3.4 billion, because it has not been delivered yet, but thank you for the first 2 years of ERI. As you know, it was about just under a billion the first year and about $800 million the second year. The improvements that we have used that to make in the forward nations to railheads, ports, and airfields --

Senator Sessions: Well, let me just -- so my time would not be eroded here. This is very troubling. So a European delegation from the parliament group was here, and I asked them to increase their spending, and the head of the delegation responded quite frankly. He said, Senator, we agree it is unacceptable that the United States pay 75 percent of the cost of NATO. So now we have this problem
that we need to have some more resources there, and we add $3.4 billion and these countries are not even putting in their fair share.

I am wondering do they have a will to survive themselves and/or have they just gotten in the habit of expecting us to step up to the plate to fund their defense. It is an unacceptable thing, as the parliamentarian said.

Would you have any final comments?

General Breedlove: Well, sir, on that we observed the same thing over the last 20 years when the nations of Europe were trying to treat Russia as a partner. They all took a vector which was decreasing budgets. Again, I do not want to overstate, but what we have seen since Wales is at least a turning in the bow of the ship. It is not perfect yet.

Senator Sessions: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McCain: Senator Sullivan has one additional question.

Senator Sullivan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, I appreciate your focus on all instruments of American power as part of our strategy. Last week, there was a very good article, front page article, in “The Wall Street Journal” on the importance of the beginning of LNG shipments from the United States, because we are now, once again, the world’s energy super power in terms of oil and gas production -- LNG shipments from the United States to
Europe, to some of the countries we have been talking about, to some of the countries that are at risk of Russian energy blackmail as part of their policies.

How important is that part of our national power as an instrument for the longer-term strategy to thwart Russian aggression and to provide a moral boost to some of these countries over there that feel like they are under the boot of the Russian energy policies? That certainly came out in this article. I do not know if you had the opportunity to read it.

General Breedlove: Senator, I am not sure I have read that exact article, but the concept is absolutely applicable, as we have discussed a little bit here today as well.

Just like you stated, Russia uses every element, and that economic element is both in the terms of pressure on returning payments and calling in loans, et cetera. But a huge part of that economic tool that is used is, as you correctly state, fuels in all manners are used as a tool, restrictions and pricing of those fuels. So anything that we can do to broaden the capability of the nations to be able to deal with that pressure I think is a good possibility, a good process.

Senator Sessions: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman McCain: General, would it be of great concern
to us if Russia developed a capability to sever our
transatlantic cables?

General Breedlove: Yes, Senator, it would. Or excuse
me. Chairman, it would.

Chairman McCain: Thank you.

General, we really appreciate your appearances before
this committee, but most of all your outstanding leadership
and we look forward to seeing you again in the future. But
to me, you are the very best of what we expect of our
military leadership, and I thank you.

Jack?

Senator Reed: I simply want to second the chairman’s
comments very sincerely and very appreciatively.

General Breedlove: Thank you, sir.

[Whereupon, at 12:00 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]